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ABSTRACT

Three common policies used by English departments in Kuwait universities to accommodate the students in appropriate course types and levels are discussed and compared from a practical perspective. The three policies are concerned with placement tests and remedial courses and are intended to: (1) place students with high scores on the standardized high school graduation examination in specialized literature and linguistics courses, and reject low scorers; (2) match the students' course levels to the examination scores; and (3) place all freshman students in remedial and introductory courses regardless of previous performance. An alternative approach for freshman students would provide a group of four distinct courses that would be taught by language specialists and geared to the study skills required of college students. The courses would also prepare students for specialized courses in the English department. The four courses would include note-taking and organization, participation in academic discussion, academic reading, and academic writing. (MSE)

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BASIC ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS OF FRESHMAN STUDENTS IN DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH

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Accommodating freshman students in departments of English with courses that suit their levels in English and, at the same time, go in line with the nature of study in these departments has become a perennial problem in programme and course planning among the staff concerned. Some believe that high scores on the G.S.S.E. exam (or equivalent) entitle these students to follow specialized courses in literature and linguistics. Low scorers, on the other hand, should in their view, be either rejected or accommodated with language courses meant to improve their standard until they cope with major courses offered by the department. Other policy makers in departments of English adopt the placement test as a determinant device of the newly-admitted students' levels of proficiency in English and, hence, accommodate them with courses that match with these levels. Another team of planners would rather allocate fresh students in departments of English on compulsory remedial/introductory language courses no matter what these students' level in English is like.

In this paper I would like to discuss these three different policies balancing the privileges and drawbacks of each from the practical point of view and, in the meantime, attempt a framework of a fourth envisaged to, perhaps, introduce a possible solution to the dilemma of the majority of new students in departments of English as well as to administrative bodies concerned.

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1. G.S.S.E. (or equivalent) scores

The secondary school leaver is normally admitted to university on the basis of his or her achievement on the G.S.S.E. (General Secondary School Examination). The level of this achievement determines, in most cases, the college, the department and even the section the student is admitted to. Whether the scores of

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this secondary school leaving test indicate the exact level of the student in English has been controversial in many EFL circles. Roger (1982) reports:

> "... after ten years' English learning, including six years with English as the medium of instruction for all secondary school subjects except Amharic, the national language (in Ethiopia), first-year university students needed to go right back to the beginning again in English."

Quite a number of EFL specialists believe that there is a real gap between English language courses at the secondary school stage and those at the university particularly in departments of English (Salamah, unpublished). This gap is manifested in the sharp distinctions in course materials, teaching methodology and objectives. It seems common in Arab countries that the pre-university EFL specialists and teachers may not be in touch with their counterparts in the university. One cannot be certain who is to blame in this respect. It might as well be that each party has a sense or belonging to its educational stage. This sense magnifies the sharp distinctions between the secondary school and the university modes of teaching, which widens the gap between the two stages at the expense of the poor students. Even if the EFL course materials and methodology in the secondary school are in line with the latest thoughts in the field, some university language instructors may take students some years back making use of, perhaps, old fashioned methods and techniques or assuming too much on the part of students, or even lacking the minimum experience in language teaching themselves. Some may never have taught at the pre-university level or - worse still - may never have visited a class (Okby, 1982). Also, some lecturers may find it humiliating to teach a language course and firmly believe that this should be the job of junior staff, namely language teachers. Methodology lecturers, instead of teaching language classes themselves, stop at the level of advising, recommending and even warning others about how to improve the situation. This theoretical phase, I believe, cannot be that effective unless the methodologist or linguist himself practises class teaching. This practice may

introduce drastic changes to the method and techniques recommended.

At this juncture, I should make it clear that, there, I am not calling for all lecturers at departments of English to teach language classes as much as calling upon those who have the theoretical background in linguistics and language teaching methodology to try language teaching practice themselves and, hence, spread out their new experience supported by their knowledge in the field. Besides, at the university level, there are expectations on the part of staff members as well as new student. The staff, relying on the high scores of students on G.S.S.E. exams, assume that students are eligible for pursuing lectures on specialized topics in literature or linguistics. The students, on the other hand, may think there is magic in the university that will enable them to understand everything immediately, boasting of the names of staff who are scheduled to teach them disregarding whether they have the basic language skills which entitle them to a reasonable comprehension ability of what they will experience in lectures and other university modes of teaching. These expectations of both parties may worsen the situation.

What could really be of help is an honest attempt to bridge the gap between the teaching situation of English at the secondary school level and that at the university one. When this is totally, or even partly, achieved one can trust the G.S.S.E. (or equivalent) scores as a criterion that helps in adequately placing the new student at the department of English within the framework of study programmes in this department.

2. Placement Test

Given that the G.S.S.E. (or equivalent) grades particularly in English may fail, in many cases, to indicate whether the one student, newly-admitted to the department of English, is competent enough to pursue the specialized courses provided by the department, some programme planners prefer to use the placement test as a device assumed to help in the determination of each student's aptitude

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or proficiency in the English language as a pass to specialized courses. It can also be regarded as an achievement test in spite of its temporary departure from testing a specific portion of knowledge or information about the language. This creates a kind of perplexity under which label the placement test is to be classified, i.e., aptitude, proficiency or achievement.

The first point that one likes to consider about the placement test is its application on a large scale basis and among heterogeneous groups of students particularly from the specialization point of view. This nature, although it helps in massive testing sessions, may fail to cater for the needs of all testing situations. It does not seem sensible to assume that a placement test is capable of determining the linguistic abilities of a student joining the department of English as it does for those of another student joining a geography department or a scientific one, e.g., civil engineering, chemistry. Unfortunately, a great number of placement tests are designed for masses of students at the expense of their different specialized fields of study.

Besides, a placement test may be a device meant to throw some light on the student's background but it may as well be a springboard to prospective study programmes. Therefore, what may suit one group of students may be inadequate for another. The misconception that makes some test designers confine their work to looking back at the student's background seems to be out of fashion nowadays. A good placement test is seen as a link between two stages of education in testing the areas (in the linguistic background) which seem relevant, and perhaps basic, to prospective study programmes.

So, a placement test should try to emphasize the items assumed to be included in the student's linguistic background and, meanwhile, orient him towards his future courses. Such a demand is not an easy job as it necessitates a closer look at a large body of information on the student's educational background as well as his present and future needs. With the limitations and obstacles

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assumed to obstruct the course of this project, one tends to feel the lack of its feasibility. However, it seems essential to consider the student's background in the light of the macro and micro language skills associated with prospective courses in departments of English. An analysis of these skills, besides its significance in the syllabus design of language courses, at the university level, is of no less importance to placement tests. It certainly enlightens the examiner on which items to select for which levels and, therefore, enables him to determine the category the testee falls under. Thus, analysing the actual needs of students can be, somehow, incorporated into the placement test to measure their competence or incompetence to pursue their subsequent courses. In addition, identifying the areas of weakness may highlight the need for elementary or preparatory language courses mainly designed to overcome these weaknesses. Thus, the placement test can act as a stimulating factor towards bridging the gap (mentioned earlier) between the secondary school language programmes and those of the university, particularly in departments of English.

It can, therefore, be inferred that the significance of the placement test as stated above stems from its content and form. The traditional placement test consists of a section for vocabulary, another for structure, a third for reading comprehension and sometimes a fourth for listening comprehension. The question that immediately strikes one's mind is whether these four sections represent all language skills and abilities. We admit that the reading comprehension section may test and determine the student's degree of thinking and understanding the text that he is asked to read. Likewise, the listening comprehension (if used) may manage to test and determine the student's ability in understanding the portion of language discourse he is asked to listen to. Nevertheless, the remaining two sections, i.e., vocabulary and structures are not directly associated with specific language skills particularly if we consider how isolated and separated from connected speech they are used in traditional placement tests. Further,

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writing and speaking as unique language skills do not receive due attention in any of these types of tests (Zughoul, 1983). Despite the recent efforts of communicative testing (Carroll, 1981; Lukmani, 1982) which are meant to measure more than isolated language skills, the traditional form of test with its aforementioned four sections is still predominant. However, one should vote for the new trends in testing considering the combination of various sub-skills exactly as people do when they exchange ideas orally or in writing putting this into effect through the 'cloze' which is regarded by many specialists as a valid test of all proficiency, (Aitken, 1977; Oller, 1980; Schohamy, 1982), 'precis writing', 'essay', 'interview', ... etc. testing techniques. The view that discourages test designers from integrating speaking and writing sections in placement tests owing to the difficulty in their measuring procedures should not be the criterion for overlooking them. Their vital importance in the nature of the university style of education should be reflected in placement tests in one way or another.

In the current forms of placement tests the student who manages to choose the correct completion to a sentence, whether lexical or structural, is not given the chance to think of proper connected speech or text. Neither is he allowed to rely on his own thinking being preoccupied with how someone else thinks. In other words his creativity is not stimulated. Moreover, this process of searching for correct or appropriate items limits his scope within a certain paradigm, whereas in free writing he may manage to put down his thoughts in the form of written stretches comprising lexical and structural items of his own. Even if the student commits a number of errors in this kind of production it can be regarded as a good indicator to the degree of his command of the mechanics, content and style of writing. It seems essential that the testee be free to express his thoughts in writing and evaluated on this basis regardless of the burden this may formulate on the examiner. Furthermore, one has the inclination that the vocabulary and structure sections should depart from the

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conventional way of testing their items by avoiding the use of short sentences which hardly have identified contexts and alternating this with more appropriate contexts, e.g., a narration of an incident or a description of a process in the form of a cloze test or the like aiming to train the testee to thematically think of something. This technique adds a teaching flavour to the test, which is recommended as one of the placement test objectives (Madsen, 1983).

Similarly, the speaking skill is normally overlooked in current placement tests. The claim that this skill cannot, practically speaking, be integrated in a written test seems to be unfair. Why should a placement test be confined to written forms? Why shouldn't a test comprise sections tackled in speech? Do language users limit themselves to reading, writing and listening roles? The placement test with its current form unfortunately overlooks a vital section that impinges upon the style of tuition at the university. Besides, one cannot ignore the fact that a language user may be able to identify a language discourse, and yet fail to produce a single utterance, which is the case with a lot of Arab learners of English (Salamah, 1981). Speaking is of no less importance than any other language skill and it has to be incorporated in placement tests regardless of the inconvenience brought about to the examiners. 'Rated interviews', or 'highly structured speech samples' may help examiners form a decision on the oral production of the examinee. Recent studies in discourse analysis may help a great deal in this regard (Coulthard, 1977). If done properly, they pinpoint the areas of weakness in the oral performance of the examinee. Despite the claim that interviews and other oral production testing techniques suggest highly subjective decisions (Heaton, 1975), yet there could be structured speech samples or interviews properly designed to elicit certain responses which in turn indicate the degree of the student's command of language (Harris, 1969). However, there have been a number of techniques meant to test oral performance but they may in actual fact overlap with other

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language skills, e.g., 'paper and pencil objective tests of pronunciation', 'reading-aloud'. This overlap violates the consistency of the tested skill. In addition, these techniques and others like 'sentence conversion' and 'response to pictorial stimuli' may limit the examinee's imagination and probably inhibit his fluency which should be the main target of these testing techniques.

With all these points for and against placement tests one can safely state that the placement test in its current condition cannot be relied on for the accommodation of new students with courses that suit their levels of proficiency and, simultaneously, enable them to pursue their major courses or study programmes particularly in departments of English. Let us turn now to another alternative adopted by some course planners in departments of English.

3. Remedial/Introductory Courses

Being distrustful of the placement test, a third team of course planners in departments of English may prefer to arrange a compulsory intensive language programme meant to overcome the students' weaknesses and prepare them for prospective specialized courses in linguistics and literature. A remedial scheme of this nature would very much rely on the time allotted to the programme and the content of prescribed courses. Sufficient time should be devoted to intensive language courses aimed at promoting the linguistic competence of learners. The question then arises of how much time would be sufficient for this purpose. Practically speaking more than one semester would be too much because this scheme should not be realized at the expense of other specialized courses seen as essential to the needs of the graduates from departments of English. We are then left with one semester and required to help overcome the language weaknesses developed after a minimum of eight years of exposure to English classes. It seems rather unlikely on the part of a large number of these students to easily get rid of their deeply-rooted weaknesses in only one

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semester. Besides, in some departments of English such an introductory or remedial scheme does not introduce or orient students towards their specialised courses, which is detrimental to their future progress in the department. Unfortunately, when planning these courses, the staff concerned do not always think differently from EFL traditionalists. They, in most cases, resort to set books about conversation, reading or writing and call these courses accordingly, e.g., introductory conversation, introductory reading and introductory writing. Is it possible that these courses will introduce the three mentioned skills? Or are they meant to develop the students' performance in them? And how significant are these skills for the students' subsequent programmes of study? As stated above, these courses are nothing but a repetition of what the students have already failed to achieve in eight years prior to their admission to the university. In addition, some remedial/introductory scheme planners may worsen the situation if they consider different objectives for each course like 'participation in discussion' and 'following lectures' as the objective of a course like 'introductory conversation'. The marriage of these two different activities at the level required and in the same course does not seem practical (James, 1977). To develop the skill of 'following lectures' given in English, sufficient and varied drills in note-taking necessitate an intensive course in listening comprehension. Such training does not have to be dovetailed with a course in conversation, as in a lecture one may listen (probably for a whole session) to a lecture with no obligation to change one's role as a listener; in a discussion, however, one alternates roles with one's partners according to the situation (Johns and Johns, 1977). In a lecture the student may play a rather passive role as a speaker in spite of the fact that he can play the role of a positive listener (Abercrombie, 1978) whereas, in a discussion, he is required to play different and effective roles of conversation. Concurrence of language activities with conversational ones, particularly at initial stages of E.A.P, would seem detrimental to the acquisition of either skill.

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Likewise, some course planners may think of an introductory reading course by introducing lengthy texts and recommending that they be read silently or aloud for the purpose of comprehension. Silent reading is, undoubtedly, a favourable technique for developing this skill, but reading aloud, which is unfortunately, still used in remedial courses of this nature, has been disfavoured by many EFL specialists (Price, 1977; Rivers, 1968; Whitaker, 1981; Frydenberg, 1982).

Furthermore, the selected texts for a reading course should be in line with, but with a less degree of difficulty from the materials of prospective specialized courses. A variety of simplified texts meant to orient students into their major should help in this regard provided that the emphasis be on the promotion of the language macro-and micro-reading skills. Many other language courses are usually prescribed as the components of remedial programmes in different departments of English and the common factor among them is that they all aim at overcoming students' weaknesses in the foreign language. Nevertheless, what is immediately needed by students is not necessarily a mastery of the four main language skills, which requires time and energy on the part of language instructors as well as motivation and devotion on the part of concerned students. One is induced to suggest a programme that may meet the immediate needs of students at departments of English with some departure from the conventional language skills. A programme geared to the students' needs from academic macro-and micro-language skills seems to be a reasonable alternative. Practically speaking a dedication of one semester for a programme of this nature may hit the target more efficiently than a remedial programme.

4. Study-Skills Orientation Programme

After this lengthy discussion about placement tests and remedial courses, it goes without saying that a programme tailored to the immediate needs of freshman students in departments of English would be a short cut towards the common target of these

departments, i.e., to prepare students for tuition in specialized courses in literature and linguistics. The needs of these students can be identified by an analysis that follows the Munby Profile or the like (Munby, 1978) considering all circumstances of both students and department. However, to cut a long story short it might be easier to look at the issue from a different angle. The lectures and tutors in departments of English would want their students to be able to follow their courses without too much effort to overcome their language barriers that may hinder the pursuit of a lecture in literature or a seminar class in linguistics. However, these barriers are not mainly caused by a lack of proficiency in the language and it would be beyond the scope of this paper to look at these factors. What seems worthwhile in this respect is to adopt an integrated service approach (Mohan, 1979; Siegel, 1982) for a synthesized programme in literature and linguistics to be organized and run by language teachers in collaboration with subject specialists.

In departments of English, courses in the fields of literature and linguistics are provided in the form of lectures, lecturettes, tutorials, seminars and the like. These modes of teaching normally associated with university tuition require certain skills or sub-skills that seem essential to students in order to acquire information and react accordingly in these sessions.

The recommended programme may classify these skills under four main categories: macro-and/or micro-skills needed for a successful reception of lectures, skills needed for a positive class participation, others for a useful manipulation of reading materials and a fourth group for effective writing. The programme is, therefore, suggested to comprise the following courses:

A) A Course in Note-Taking and Organizing

A lecture or lecturette might not be adequately received and/or grasped unless the students were able to take notes of the necessary information. With the language barriers referred to earlier, note-taking does not seem easy for students following lectures

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in general or applied linguistics on the one hand and in English drama or novel on the other. Here the students need sufficient training in how to follow lectures. A course designed to cater for these academic needs seems to be a must for freshman students in departments of English in particular.

A note-taking course may be based on materials extracted and/or adapted from real lectures or lecturettes given on English literature or linguistic sciences. A portion of a real lecture in these fields could be tackled in class as meat for practising the language sub-skills of note-taking. Sufficient and adequate drills could develop this skill for students in departments of English if materials were selected from actual substance of courses in novel, poetry, phonetics, psycholinguistics, etc.

Collecting these materials needs a bit of effort and collaboration between subject specialists (lecturers) and course designers/course teachers. It is suggested that a course of this nature be presented in the following order:

1) Teaching students the system of abbreviations and method of jotting down information.
2) Listening (twice) to recorded (or, if possible, video-taped) material (adequate in size and level of difficulty) selected from authentic lectures given in specialized courses, e.g., novel, drama.
3) Requesting students to take notes of the content of this recorded material while listening.
4) Teaching students how to identify and note down important points, which can be achieved by focusing on the area/context (on tape) that contains each point.
5) Replaying tape (or video-tape) as a whole giving students the chance to match the content with their own jottings.
6) Using undrilled (new) material for exercise.
7) Providing students, if possible, with copies of taped materials.

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One likes to warn course planners against the use of all-purpose-text books particularly for a note-taking course simply because what may suit a group of students is not necessarily fit for the needs of others. Freshman students in departments of English have special requirements some of which should be met by the suggested course.

B) A Course in Academic Discussion Participation

A course in lecture-pursuing or note-taking is not enough to equip freshman students in departments of English with all means to follow their major courses in literature and linguistics. Another course for developing participation in academic discussion is also essential. Departments of English arrange a number of seminars and tutorial classes for their students every week. Many major courses are followed by these sessions which are mainly provided to help students loosen their tied tongues to comment, criticize, and exchange views on material already exposed to in lectures or in references. This activity has proved to be a serious problem among Arab students particularly those who pursue their higher education in countries whose national language is English (Salamah, 1981). For lack of fluency in English in addition to insufficient training experiences in conversation among other members of their different social institutions, these students are rather inhibited in social interaction situations hardly playing adequate positive roles in discussions with a liability for misunderstanding and misconception between them and other participants who might wrongly assume that Arab students' silence is always a sign of their understanding and agreement.

Inadequate communicative experiences on the part of the majority of Arab students at home and in class with the atmosphere of the dominating father in the Arab-family and the teacher-oriented class at school, it is fairly justified to find the Arab student in this dilemma of passivity in English classes in particular.

A course geared to the immediate needs of students here would concentrate on all possible means that help encourage them

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to play positive roles in conversations and achieve more effective interaction in group discussions (Argyle, 1965; Duncan, 1974). One of the main criteria on which a course of this nature has to be based is the development of the student's communicative competence and motivation (Hymes, 1971) to take part in discussion. This cannot be realized in a formal atmosphere with the teacher facing a class, instructing and correcting their performance all the time. The traditional style of teaching should accept the alternative of learner-oriented learning, i.e., group discussions managed and carried out by learners themselves with the teacher as an ordinary member in the group except when there is a dire need for his role as adviser. The teacher may prepare materials for discussions but it is recommended to have spontaneous discussions in these classes. It might be worthwhile on the part of the course teacher to advise the whole class group (or perhaps smaller groups) about the topic (or topics) of discussion prior to the actual session of this class. Despite the view that this might disrupt the spontaneity of discussion, there is a counterargument which maintains that this might be a good incentive for shy or weak students in particular to be much more well-prepared and, consequently, self-confident and outspoken in the actual discussion. Moreover, free discussion conducted by peers rather than the teacher is likely to add a flavour of spontaneity to the atmosphere of interaction. Topics to be discussed are recommended to be selected from materials already taught in major courses or relevant references. These selected topics are suggested to be in line with the materials prescribed for the aforementioned note-taking course or extending this a little bit to cover related topics from students' own environment assuming their group homogeneity in this respect.

The style of conducting this class should be as much of a learner-learner interactive type as possible. Students should be encouraged to get prepared and distribute roles among themselves with an alternating leader each session. Model

conversations could initially be provided (on tape) just to acquaint students with the style and strategies of role-play in discussions (Johns & Johns, 1977). It might also be of value to train students in the phrases that cause misunderstanding or disruption of communication. The class might be divided into smaller groups each of which might tackle a different topic (or part of topic) for discussion.

In case different parts of one topic are assigned to different groups it is suggested that each group leader brief the whole class about his group's work and perhaps the teacher or a brilliant student summarizes the whole body of information reported about the topic. In this course students should be encouraged to make interviews with their lecturers, peers, friends and family members provided they concentrate on relevant topics to those tackled in the discussion participation course suggested here.

C) A Course in Academic Reading

In addition to the recommended note-taking and discussion participation, it seems of vital importance to consider an academic reading course that looks after the academic needs of new students in departments of English. These students, who are expected to attend lectures in major courses and participate in academic discussions, are likewise referred to the library to find more information about the topics tackled in lectures and/or seminars. Unless the student is familiar with the skill of finding appropriate references and extracting the right information from them, it is considered a waste of time spending hours in the library trying to find the extra materials meant to widen his scope on the subject he deals with.

A course of this nature would require taking practical steps towards an effective use of the library. The system of book classification and catalogue checking should be familiar to each student. Library visits under teachers' guidance should be encouraged. Alternatively, actual books and references may be brought in class to show students how to find information sought

about a particular topic. Seeking information with this style should, also, coincide with the content of the above-mentioned prescribed courses.

Students should be taught not only how to find information but how to make notes of this information. It is not always practical to extract whole sections or portions from references just to consider for additional materials on a certain topic. Summarizing and note-making should serve the purpose here. These need sufficient training and practice in order to be at the disposal of students whenever they need to seek information in reference books. One should reiterate here that it would be preferable to select text materials from those included in major courses in literature and linguistics whenever possible and in the meantime avoid the 'world-wide' text books claimed to suit all times and types of learners.

D) A Course in Academic Writing

A fourth course that seems quite fruitful for new students in departments of English is the one which looks after their immediate writing needs in their majors. As soon as these new students join specialized courses in literature and linguistics they are requested to produce written assignments. It is true that they may experience a language barrier at this juncture, but their weak performance in writing can be developed if they become familiar with the style and conventions of writing in addition to how to organize their thoughts and views. An initial step to accurate and effective writing would be systematic thinking. A course that considers these points can be practically successful if based on the outcome of the three prescribed courses so far. The materials used for note-taking, discussion-participation and academic reading yield some thoughts which may formulate a formidable foundation for the writing course.

Students have to be acquainted with the mechanics of writing before requesting them to write. Besides, it is neither practical nor motivating to inform students about the abundant errors in their written assignments. It might be commendable to encourage them to continue writing as long as they maintain a minimum of

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communication through their writing. Linguistic accuracy should not be the first goal of effective writing. The flow and sequencing of ideas should have priority provided the message be passed to other parties. Linguistic accuracy can be gradually attained by successful communicative experiences. It may, temporarily, be overlooked for the sake of fluency. However, it is harmless if the course teacher collects common mistakes and either explains them or rather integrates their correct forms in subsequent drills.

Furthermore, students should be encouraged to write on a variety of topics related to their specialisation, i.e., English language and literature. Further, it is highly advisable on the part of the teacher to mark and correct the written assignments and return them to students. The quality rather than the quantity should be one of the main criteria of assessment. A variety of exercises on outlining, summarising, precis-writing, short and long reporting, etc. may be useful in a writing course.

With this envisaged four-course-programme based on the immediate study skills of students newly-admitted to departments of English and oriented towards their major courses in literature and linguistics, gratifying results are hopefully expected particularly if the following precautionary measures are taken into consideration:

1. G.C.E. (or equivalent) scores in English courses should form a basis for admission to the department (of English) major courses. An average of 70% is suggested as a minimum percentage for this purpose.

2. Graded language skills courses should be maximally offered.

3. Language courses should be taught by qualified English language specialists with adequate experience and calibre. Specialised staff in both linguistics and literature should be exempted from handling language courses.

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4. Language skills courses as well as the study skills programme should neither be underestimated by the specialized staff nor overestimated by the language instructors.

5. Abundant language activities have to be provided for new and old students in addition to graduates, if possible.

6. Dramatization of English works of art has to be facilitated for students.

7. Social gatherings and interactive experiences have to be maximized between the staff and students.

Conclusion

I have endeavoured in this paper to highlight the different policies adopted by departments of English as concerns freshman students. I argued against the policy that favours total reliance on the General Secondary School Examination scores, which has proved to be unreliable in multifarious situations.

I also looked at the policy that manipulates the placement test to determine the level of proficiency for every student and, accordingly, accommodate him with suitable courses. Owing to the failure of the placement test (in its traditional form and content) as a measuring device to help reach a fair decision on the degree of competence of each testee, I tried to account for my own suspicions as concerns the validity and old-fashioned techniques of these tests.

Thirdly, I examined the nature of the current programmes offering remedial courses to help students to cope with the main study programmes in departments of English. I tried to explain that what is being done is a sheer waste of time that sometimes amounts to a whole semester.

Eventually, I set forth my envisaged programme for freshman students as geared to the actual requirements of these students

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represented by certain academic study skills the acquisition of each of which needs a separate course taught by a language specialist. The four courses are suggested to be integrated and oriented towards the major specialized courses provided by departments of English.

The suggested programme cannot guarantee a solution to the dilemma of freshman students in departments of English, but it is envisaged to form a foundation on whose model a more elaborate project could rest with a view to confronting these students' aggravating problem.

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